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ABSTRACT

This paper offers a tentative and exploratory discussion of the assumptive bases and ethical implications of a theory of interpersonal listening based on empathy. The first major section of the paper presents a brief historical overview of the empathic tradition, particularly as it relates to interpersonal communication study and to theory construction in listening. The second section offers a critique of empathic listening on the basis of three considerations: (1) the reification of the notion of self, resulting in the untenable position of psychologizing human language, meaning, and conduct and contributing to the "new narcissism"; (2) the tendency toward studying, teaching, and employing empathic listening as an instrumental technique for enhancing personal growth; and (3) the "cultural baggage" of the sixties-styled nonevaluation, inviting ethical neutralism. The third section formulates an alternative to the listening process, which is rooted in contemporary dialogical and hermenuetic philosophy. (FL)

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AN ETHICAL ALTERNATIVE TO EMPATHIC LISTENING: AN EXISTENTIAL/PHENOMENOLOGICAL APPROACH

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AN ETHICAL ALTERNATIVE TO EMPATHIC LISTENING:

AN EXISTENTIAL/PHENOMENOLOGICAL APPROACH

For the past three decades Ralph Nichols' pioneering efforts in listening theory and research have provided a seminal point-of-departure for subsequent study and elaboration.[1] Since Nichols' original project in 1948, a substantial body of theory and research has been generated in psychological, educational and communication journals.[2] In particular, the predominant theoretical/research focus in speech communication literature has been the examination of diverse variables and dimensions of "comprehensive" listening (listening for understanding of central ideas, principles, themes) and "critical" listening (listening to persuasive messages), both of which find their locus primarily in the public speaking and mass media arenas.

With the rapid rise to prominence of interpersonal communication investigation during the past twenty years, however, attention has turned increasingly toward the dynamics of listening within the dyadic context. With this interpersonal emphasis has come the empathic approach to listening as a supplement and/or alternative to comprehensive and critical listening. In a recent study of interpersonal communication courses at American colleges and universities, Berryman and Weaver reported that "The ten most often selected topics to which time is given (in decending [sic] order) are verbal communication, nonverbal communication, feedback, self-concept, barriers to communication, listening, perception, self-disclosure, empathy, and communication models [italics not in the original]."[3] Further evidence of this

interpersonally grounded concern for investigating what has been variously termed "empathic,"[4] "nondirective,"[5] or "therapeutic"[6] listening can be found by noting that just under half of the 1980 International Listening Association Conference schedule was devoted explicitly or implicitly to relational listening.[7] Finally, in interpersonal communication texts and journal articles, comfortably juxtaposed with the venerated names of Nichols, Rankin, and Brown and Carlsen, we currently find equal billing given such relative "newcomers" as Rogers, Mayeroff, and Truax and Carkhuff. Clearly, the impact of empathic listening holds the potential of becoming a formidable, perhaps even decisive force in the area of listening study as it applies to the domain of interpersonal communication.

Despite the apparent widespread and rapid assimilation of the concept of empathic listening within interpersonal communication theory, few efforts to reflect critically upon philosophical assumptions and value commitments implied by the empathic tradition have been undertaken.[8] A reflective stance is both necessary and desirable, if we are to adequately establish the validity, viability, and presumed value of a given concept or theoretical orientation.[9] Hence questions such as the following emerge as foundational in determining the theoretical and ethical parameters of empathic listening: What constitutes the basic tradition or paradigm that grounds the empathic listening orientation? Where is the locus of meaning in communicative encounters? What roles do valuation, judgment, and ethical decision-/choice-making play in empathic listening? What are the social consequences and limits of empathic listening?

This essay offers a tentative and exploratory discussion of the assumptive bases and ethical implications of a theory of interpersonal

listening based on empathy. Our treatment of these issues consists of (1) a brief historical overview of the empathic tradition, particularly as it relates to interpersonal communication study and to theory construction in listening; (2) a critique of theoretical and ethical presuppositions underlying the concept of empathic listening; and (3) an alternative formulation of the listening process, rooted in contemporary dialogical and hermeneutic philosophy. Our purpose is not to demean the potential or actual value of studying, teaching, researching, or actively engaging in empathic listening; rather, our aim is to clarify existing tacit assumptions which ground empathic listening and thus open what we hope will be a fruitful dialogue regarding the ethical limitations and constructive possibilities offered by empathic listening theory.

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF THE EMPATHIC TRADITION[10]

While the concept of empathy has been traced as far back as Plato's Republic and Aristotle's Poetics,[11] the term "empathy" finds its contemporary origin as recently as 1909 in the work of Cornell psychologist Edward B. Titchener.[12] Titchener's coinage of "empathy" as the English equivalent for the German "Einfühlung" ("feeling into") was introduced in his explication of the theory of German psychologist/aesthetician Theodor Lipps, who conceived of aesthetic empathy as a state in which an observer experiences a loss of self-awareness and an accompanying fusion of identity with the object of perception. Titchener's particular contribution to and elaboration of Lipps' theory rests in his distinguishing "the process of empathy from its aesthetic roots, focusing the description of the process on certain necessary conditions that identify it as a distinct mimetic, kinesthetic, and organic projection

which carries meaning but differs from sympathy [italics not in the original]."[13] Since Titchener's initial efforts, a vast body of empathic theory and empirical research and testing, particularly in the fields of psychology, psychiatry, and sociology has been generated.[14]

In the 1960's, drawing liberally from the literature of humanistic psychology, empathy made its conspicuous and explicit entrance into the theoretical domain of speech communication.[15] Of particular import has been David K. Berlo's description of empathy, which he defines as "the ability to project ourselves into other people's personalities."[16] Berlo identifies two major theories of empathy, which, Deetz argues, characterize and undergird the mainstream of American communication studies.[17]

1. Inference Theory of Empathy: Berlo outlines the empathic formulation of psychologist Solomon Asch in this first variation. Based on a concept of self which arises through the symbolic relating of a person's internal psychological states to direct observations of his/her own physical behaviors, inference theory maintains that we can have first-hand knowledge of our own internal states, but only "second-hand evidence of other people's internal states."[18] Consequently, empathic understanding of another person's experience relies upon the ability to infer that "a similar behavior produced by someone else would represent a similar feeling."[19] In short, empathy occurs through inference by analogy and is fully dependent on a person's having actually and directly experienced a particular internal state, emotion, thought, etc.

2. Role-Taking Theory of Empathy:[20] Following out the work of sociologist George Herbert Mead, Berlo posits role-taking theory as a

reversal of the self-concept/empathy relationship. Berlo offers a succinct and cogent comparison of the two positions:

> Inference theory assumes a concept of self, and suggests that we empathize by using the self-concept to make inferences about the internal states of other people. Inference theory suggests that the self-concept determines how we empathize. Role-taking theory argues . . . that the concept of self does not determine empathy. Rather, communication produces the concept of self and role-taking accounts for empathy.[21]

Rooted in a developmental perspective, empathy by role-taking "is not limited by self-experience but by the other's experience and one's ability to imagine and recreate that experience."[22] Thus, in role-taking theory vicarious as well as direct experience can account for empathic understanding.

A selective survey of contemporary interpersonal communication and listening texts[23] reveals that the treatment of dyadic listening remains consistent with Berlo's insistence on the centrality of empathy in effecting successful communication.[24] Beginning with and assuming as axiomatic the functional distinction between speaking and listening, the surveyed texts emphasize empathy as a desirable cognitive and/or emotive dimension of both speaking and listening, but as originating with the "receptive" end of communicating, i.e. listening.[25] Despite clearly disparate theoretical orientations, the texts remain faithful to Berlo's projective definition of empathy, e.g. "to get inside the other, to view the world through his eyes"[26] and conform as well to the popularly phrased description of empathy as being "in the same shoes"[27] or listening to others "with 'ears like theirs'".[28]

Although in essential congruence with these descriptions, Carl R. Rogers (perhaps the preeminent champion of humanistic counseling and

"nondirective therapy"[29]) qualifies empathic understanding as a grasping of "the moment-to-moment experiencing occurring in the inner world of the client, as the client sees and feels it, without losing the separateness of his [the counselor's] own identity."[30] Rogers underscores the necessity of maintaining separate identities when he notes that empathy is experienced when a counselor senses "the client's inner world of private personal meanings as if it were your own, but without ever losing the 'as if' quality."[31] Retaining this "as if" quality is essential if the counselor is to "both communicate his understanding of what is vaguely known to the client, and . . . also voice meanings in the client's experience of which the client is scarcely aware."[32] Ultimately, according to Rogers, the purpose of constructive, empathically based interpersonal encounters is to facilitate and enhance personal growth in the individual. Hence subjective experience of the internal states of both self and other assumes a critical position in Rogers' framework.[33]

Rogers' approach is fully in accord with what has been termed "expressivist"[34] and a "humanistic celebration"[35] orientation toward interpersonal communication.[36] Drawing extensively from the literature of humanistic psychology,[37] conceptualizations of empathic listening in our text review embody the basic precepts forwarded by the expressivist perspective. According to Johannesen, salient features (applying both generally to expressivism and specifically to empathic listening) include:[38] (1) a normative emphasis on a subject's unmediated, personal and direct experience of others' internal states, experience which is "non-social" in character, i.e. transcending social constraints in the

forms ~ facades, roles, conventions, artifices, etc.; (2) a concomitant concern for authenticity in the sense of discovering, expressing, actualizing the "real self"; (3) an assumption of the innate goodness of the human being, reflected in the listener's attitude of "unconditional positive regard"[39] understood as confirmation of the other, but not necessarily as agreement; (4) presentness to the other--active participation in open and total risk-taking, disclosure and receptivity; (5) equality of participants' experience, with avoidance of exercise of power, coercion and manipulation; (6) a nonevaluative supportive climate in which the listener withholds value judgments and demonstrates a "capacity to listen without anticipating, interfering, competing, refuting, or warping meanings into preconceived interpretations."[40]

In sum, empathic listening presupposes a fundamental dualism between two independently existing subjects, correlative to the communicative functions of speaking and listening. Based upon the necessity to reconcile differences (and the presumed separation) between self and other, the empathic listener's task is to reproduce the psychological intentions or internal states of the speaker. Accordingly, subjective experience becomes the final arbiter of meaning ("meaning is in people, not words.")

In the upcoming section of this paper we attempt to critique empathic listening on the basis of three considerations: (1) the "reification of the notion, self," resulting in the untenable position of "psychologizing" human language, meaning and conduct, contributing to what has been called the "new narcissism"; (2) the tendency toward studying, teaching, and employing empathic listening as an instrumental

technique for enhancing personal growth, i.e. "self-actualization"; and (3) the "cultural baggage" of sixties-styled nonevaluation, inviting ethical neutralism.

SUBJECTIVIZATION OF THE LISTENING ACT

The listening act is subjectivized when one's assumptive premise about the origin of communicative understanding is rooted in the internal matrix of the person. According to Deetz, the internal focus is widely accepted by communication theoreticians and practitioners.[41] As stated earlier, the works of Berlo, Rogers, and Truax and Carkhuff have given sanction to this internal approach with statements similar to that of Dean Barnlund. "Communication, as I conceive it, is a word that describes the process of creating a meaning. . . . Messages may be generated from the outside--by a speaker, a television screen, a scolding parent--but meanings are generated from within [italics not in the original]."[42]

Although the internal premise of the empathic tradition is widely accepted, criticism of it has arisen from individuals in speech communication with varied areas of expertise.[43] Their argument is that an internal focus is but one way to view and understand human communication, not the only or necessarily the best way. Concepts such as selective perception and the fact that more stimuli address one than can be processed announce that listening is limited, faulty, situated, and grounded in bias or assumption. In short, one's focus of attention, what one will hear, is structured by assumptions such as the internal premise of empathy, the meaning is in the person.

The focus of attention phenomenon is often introduced by analysis of the old woman/young woman drawing.[44] Frequently a student will ask that someone trace the old woman or young woman, because he or she is unable to alter focus of attention in order to recognize both characters. This traditional exercise reveals the fundamental nature of this phenomenon. The power of the inner premise in one's focus of attention is described in another classroom experiment conducted by William Pemberton. Pemberton was convinced that one's focus of attention is directed by basic assumptions about communicative understanding. To test this, he had students taste pieces of paper dipped in phenyl-thio-carbamide, a chemical that is tasteless to thirty percent of the people and considered bitter by seventy percent. He then asked the students, who had varying responses to the paper, where the taste originated. Their responses included in me, in the paper, and in a transaction between me and the paper.[45] This can be correlated with respective assumptions in communication theory: humanistic (meaning is in the person), behavioral (meaning is a result of outside contingencies), and transactional and dialogical (meaning is ontologically made present "between" persons).[46]

The point of the above assumption discussion is that there is no such thing as a neutral concept or communication theory.[47] Contrasting assumptions result in a focus of attention that establishes different limits on what one can observe and listen to, which then gives rise to a communication theory in accordance with the limitations inherent in the initial assumptions. In essence, a communication theory carries with it a bias rooted in a basic assumption. As Bauman states in

Hermeneutics and Social Science, one works from tradition or prejudice that is inherent in one's paradigm,[48] which implies that the empathic approach is situated in a tradition that colors what is heard and discovered in accordance with its basic internal assumption.

The notion of inevitability of bias in a communication theory is still a debatable point, as described by Beltran in "Research Ideologies in Conflict."[49] However, the works of Gadamer and Heidegger have established the philosophical ground for this statement with their emphasis on historical situatedness--to be human is to be limited in understanding by one's context; thus a presuppositionless interpretation is not possible.[50] The scientific basis for this statement has been established by Bohr's theory of complementarity, Einstein's theory of relativity, and Heisenberg's principle of uncertainty.[51] In addition, the philosophical and scientific basis for bias in communication theory has been described by a number of communication researchers, including individuals who participated in a symposium on qualitative methodology recorded in the Western Journal of Speech Communication[52] and a recent description of Heidegger's existential-phenomenological understanding of bias and presupposition in Hyde and Smith (1979).[53] Thus, a substantial body of literature reveals bias in theory as inevitable. The following material examines how the phenomenon of internal bias inherent in the empathic premise is nourished by the notion of "self".

Reification of Self

The internal bias of empathy results in focusing attention on "getting in touch with one's own self" and "attempting to understand the other's self." According to Deetz in his discussion of Berlo's

empathy analysis, this self concentration reifies the notion of self into a possessable entity. "The self, thus, changes from a conceptual to an empirical question and people start to look for it."[54] The self becomes an empirical event that one pursues, rather than a hypothetical construct.

Concern about the reification of the self has emerged from varied disciplines. Abraham Maslow, often called the father of humanistic psychology, stated his regret about the use of the "self-actualization" term in his last major work before his death.[55] Hart's work with rhetorical sensitivity has emphasized the fictional nature of "real self" constructs,[56] and Darnell and Brockriede have affirmed his analysis.[57] The pursuit of the self results in a shift from self as "being-in-the-world" to self as "being-attempting-to-possess-the-world." The internal premise invites a building and storing of experience in order to construct an actualized or fully developed self.[58] Empathy then becomes a task of possessing similar "self" experience in order to understand the other or an imagining through role-taking of how the other stored such experience in his or her own self.

Concentration on selves that results in a failure to attend to the communication at hand is due to a psychologizing of listening/speaking experience. The possessing of experience in order to build a self gives one a feeling of ownership that is fertile territory for psychologism. This possessive orientation encourages such questions as: "Will I profit from this listening encounter?" or "What's in this listening experience for me?"[59] This orientation relegates people and experience to objects and commodities that need to be possessed or ignored.

Maurice Friedman, a current spokesperson against the psychologistic notion of possession in interpersonal relationships, states:

> To seek to 'have' an experience is already to risk not having it; for the more we focus on it as a goal, the more we are in danger of removing it into ourselves, or psychologizing it. The word psychologism is in no sense an attack either on psychology or psychotherapy when these observe their proper limits. It is an attack on the tendency to make the reality of our relationship to what is not ourselves--persons and cats, sunsets and trees--into what is essentially within ourselves.
>
> The very notion of having experience, whether it be psychedelic, mystical, sexual, travel, or adventure robs us of what experience once meant--something which can catch us up, take us outside ourselves, and bring us into relationship with the surprising, the unique, the other.[60]

Friedman often relates the following incident about Martin Buber that contrasts the difference between the psychologistic impulse to own an experience and a willingness to respond to what emerges between oneself and another in the listening/speaking event. As Buber was working with people in a lecture-discussion format, he mentioned to Friedman that he wished people would ask him more questions. A psychologistic interpretation of this might be that Buber felt he owned or possessed much knowledge and people would be foolish if they did not take advantage of this opportunity. However, he was not suggesting this at all. Buber meant that:

> 'If people would come to me with real questions, something would come into being between them and me that does not exist now!' The questioner is just as important as the answerer. A wise man is not a fountain of knowledge. On the contrary, he is helpless until someone brings to him a question great enough to evoke a profound response. He does not have the wisdom. It literally happens, comes to be, in the between.[61]

When the self is reified to an empirical phenomenon possession, not understanding, is encouraged. Culturally we are accustomed to owning what we can touch, see, and want. The phrases, "Get in touch with your

feelings," and "You must take ownership of your experience," emerge from such a framework. In short, selves in discovery of "empirical findings" can result in dichotomous objects meeting in the listening event. As Campbell stated in his review of Gadamer's Truth and Method, a fraudulent form of listening is then rooted in a subject/object dichotomy.[62] This dichotomy of self and other is revealed further as one examines the fetish for technique that often accompanies the teaching of empathic listening.

Listening as Technique

A common assumption of Rogerian listeners is that the other should be met as a person, not an object. Stewart has described this in his discussion of noninterchangeability.[63] Yet, the communicator who sees empathy as a universal approach to listening, fails to recognize the uniqueness or noninterchangeability of people.

One of the authors vividly recalls examples of inflexibility in employing the empathic technique in classes in his related graduate education area, counseling. The following exchange is but one example of this concern. A student asked a counseling professor to further explain a theoretical concept. Instead, the counselor paraphrased back to the student, "You are feeling some frustration with the lack of clarity in this material. You are puzzled about the material's helpfulness when it is so difficult to understand." The student then responded, "I need some added clarity; I am not in need of empathic analysis." The professor's efforts to be supportive through the paraphrasing technique gave more of an impression of superiority than empathy. In effect, the professor was saying, "I heard what you said,

but my training allows me to know what you really mean." Granted, at times it is necessary to look for a hidden reason for another's actions and words. But to do this continually results in the mistrust of human speech--not understanding. Such action labels the knower as superior and the questioner as subordinate.

At the time the author became sensitive to this problem, he had great admiration for Carl Rogers, the founder of client-centered therapy. In reading Rogers' material and watching him on video tape, a non-evaluative and supportive relationship seemed a liveable possibility. The question was, "Why did relationships seem so tense and judgmental between graduate students and even some faculty who purported to be Rogerians?" Something is often lost in the translation from the founder of a theory to its followers. In all probability, Carl Rogers and innovators of other theories are perhaps often distressed by the strange imitations of their procedures. Some distortion of a therapeutic system is inevitable as it becomes part of common practice and language for a larger population of "experts".

However, as understandable as this diluting of a therapeutic system may be, it does not reveal the source of the fundamental problem the author experienced with counseling associates. The author's experience and subsequent study has revealed that one of the fundamental problems encountered in that graduate setting was learning of the "empathic levels" by Truax and Carkhuff[64] as unquestioned technique. A static system was used to get in touch with a concrete entity called the other's "real self." The diluting of Rogers' orientation invites "professional empathic practitioners," to view their knowledge as a science, rather than as artful sensitivity rooted in study.

Empathy as an inflexible technique leads to a professional arrogance of always searching for a hidden meaning to paraphrase back, which may not always be present. Sometimes no deeper level of response is needed at all; the initial level of meaning may be the only accurate one. According to Buber, the search for a meaning beyond what is stated is problematic, overused, and strikes at the heart of genuine exchange. Buber outlines this concept in a provocative essay, "Hope for this Hour." He states that the most significant obstacle to Robert Hutchin's call for a "Civilization of Dialogue" is existential mistrust--a lack of faith in what the other says. Buber states that suspended belief and suspicion are sometimes warranted. However, his warning is that suspicion about what the other really means is no longer an occasional response--such disbelief has become commonplace.[65] Buber's essay on existential mistrust describes individuals losing the capacity to determine when it is appropriate and legitimate to look for a hidden motive. As Frankl states, individuals no longer know when to accept manifest speech and when to unmask the said in hopes of finding the "real" motive.[66]

Thus, the contention of this paper is that technique can ignore the actual communication happening, when the primary concern is the proper use of a method instead of a genuine meeting between persons. This critique is in accordance with the tradition of Gadamer, Buber, Barrett's latest work, The Illusion of Technique, and Friedman's distinction between science and scientism.[67] Empathy as artful sensitivity to others is more closely aligned with Friedman's definition of science than is adherence to a rigid scale of responses deemed appropriate void of the context between persons. The danger with the notion of

empathy is one common to all concepts once they are "precisely taught" in the abstract--they become less valuable in concrete listening between persons. The next section follows the teaching of listening theme by revealing the cultural bias that is inherent in empathy instruction.

Cultural Bias

Empathic listening is rooted in two additional humanistic psychology notions: nonevaluation and a belief in the person as innately good, if he or she follows organismic impulses (Rogers[68]), or at the very least neutral, if one follows the way of Tao (Maslow[69]). Empathy is most often revealed to another (and Rogers emphasizes the need for the client to perceive this action[70]) through paraphrase of the other's feelings. The assumption behind this method is that as the other gets in touch with his or her own feelings, organismic urgings will result in constructive behavior, in contrast to introjected values and motivations.[71]

However, not all scholars of human behavior accept the good or neutral premise offered by humanistic psychologists. Lorenz, Ardrey, and Freud[72] are but a few who offer an opposing stance. Yet another group espouses the notion that the human has both constructive and destructive possibilities. Friedman, Buber, and Frankl each have hope for the other, as Buber's statement that he had never met a child who was irretrievably bad implies.[73] However, as his volume on Good and Evil suggests, he views the human with a need to make choices about what to actualize, good or evil.[74] He does not see an inner/outer battle between good organismic impulses and often bad introjected values, as does Rogers.[75] This is no minor point, as revealed in the classic Rogers-Buber debate.[76] These different stances lead to contrasting views on nonevaluation.

Buber's polar view of a person's potential makes judgment, evaluation, and confrontation necessary, in order to give strength to constructive impulses.[77] However, Rogers' faith in the organism is congruent with his nonevaluative stance. One only needs to sort out organismic feelings from introjected values in order to give birth to constructive impulses--and such a process works most rapidly in a nonevaluative context, according to Rogers. Thus, two fundamentally different views of the origin of good and evil have given rise to contrasting opinions on the nonevaluation issue.

To some degree, the above distinction is to be expected if one examines the different backgrounds that nourished the theories. Rogers' orientation is middle-class optimism that is grounded in the theory of progress (i.e. the notion of becoming a person) and epitomized by the notions of the "New Frontier" and the "Great Society." On the other hand, the work of Friedman, Frankl and Buber is influenced by the systematic German execution of seven million Jews. Both approaches can interpret current events, such as the rise of anti-Semitism in Europe, the growth of the KKK, and the increasing occurrence of violent crime. However, these two varied approaches result in different answers. Buber's dialogue offers a dual action of trust and confrontation, and Rogers' empathy provides unconditional positive regard and genuineness or congruence. The former is rooted in caring judgment and the latter in reflective nonevaluation.

Buber and others contend that judgment of another's behavior and direct confrontation is sometimes deemed necessary by the historical circumstance. Such a judgmental response is considered inevitable by Gadamer and Heidegger due to the impossibility of a presuppositionless

stance. Paul Tillich has stated that caring judgment, not nonevaluation is more appropriate in a constructive and healthy interpersonal encounter.[78] Some social change proponents have even labeled the nonevaluative approach as unethical.[79]

Thus, if one rejects the premises from which empathy has emerged, there is little probability that one will accept the concept. In summary, some would consider such faith in the person not only naive, but unethical. As Martin Buber has suggested in response to Carl Rogers, at times a person's behavior and words need to be directly confronted[80]--nonevaluative empathy is not sufficient. The following section offers an alternative to empathic listening, which can be viewed metaphorically as a call to recognize the implications of the Copernican Revolution.

THE COPERNICAN REVOLUTION

To offer an alternative to empathic listening is no small task. Internalization and ownership of experience is the heart of the western viewpoint, represented in our admiration of rugged individualism and our system of capitalism. As Martin Buber so aptly stated, "The monstrous, the dreadful phenomenon of psychologism so prevails that one cannot simply bring about healing with a single blow."[81]

Perhaps one can liken a shift from an internalized and possessive view of communication to a call for a new Copernican Revolution. Copernicus outlined the fallacy of the earth as the center of the universe. He debunked Ptolemy's theory that the earth was stationary and around it the planets and stars moved. Copernicus revealed that the earth was a participant in the universe, but not the primary point. Individuals such as Frankl, Buber and Gadamer are making similar points

about the listening/speaking event. Viewpoints that recognize meaning as emerging from inside themselves are still in accordance with Ptolemy's ill-fated notion of the earth as the center of the universe. Perhaps it is time to recognize that one is a participant in life who affects others, while also being affected by them. The new Copernican Revolution in human communication sees events happening between persons, not inside isolated monads.

The Copernican Revolution is applicable to human listening as an alternative to the temptation to see oneself as the center of the universe. In interpersonal communication, one could call the Copernican Revolution a listening to both self and others while walking a narrow ridge of openness to the comments of both parties in an exchange. The Copernican Revolution implies a shift of attention from the internal self and the empathic effort "to get inside another's head" to a participatory event of being sensitive to the situation. Hart and Burks, Darnell and Brockriede, Arnett, and Bitzer have all pointed to the importance of situational sensitivity,[82] which is contingent upon self, other, and the historical moment. As Buber has stated, this form of listening is not revealed through technique; rather it is an attitude that places primacy on the relational situation, not just the individual.[83]

Listening sensitively to the situation allows laughter, judgment, sharing of similar experiences, etc. to occur. No set mode of response is subscribed to a priori. The combination of empathy, unconditional positive regard, congruence, and the client's perception of these does not always produce change. Perhaps the reason for this is that sensitivity to the listening situation would have demanded that a much different exchange take place in order to facilitate growth.

Thus, an ethical alternative to empathy that is rooted in an existential-phenomenological approach is a listening sensitivity grounded not in technique, but in participatory openness. The concern of the authors is that the precepts of humanistic psychology are not entirely acceptable and to solidify them into a technique of empathic listening is therefore unacceptable. At times, judgment and at other times caring are the correct listening responses, if one is sensitive to what is demanded in everyday experience.

However, such situationally sensitive listening is not relativistic. It is a dialogue "between" persons that Buber has called respondability.[84] One's responsibility is to respond in the dialogical encounter in an attitude of commitment in openness, which Buber deems the narrow ridge and Friedman a touchstone.[85] Such a listening/speaking encounter entails being open to the other's view, but being committed to one's own, as well. If a relational situation results in the other's view emerging as stronger, one changes opinions. However, if one remains unconvinced, one may state, "This is what I heard and this is why I disagree."[86] One's responsibility or call to respond can vary from agreement, to open disagreement, to withholding disagreement. One can not decide in advance which procedure will be most appropriate. Real listening involves a flexible repertoire, not a static technique.

Thus, the ethical alternative to empathic listening is the freeing of oneself from technique and committing of oneself to a sensitive study and participation in a listening situation. The internalized view of meaning is the orientation of the initial frontiersman in the new world, congruent with the world view developed by Ptolemy. The

Copernican Revolution in listening, in contrast, is rooted in the importance of the relationship and the parties that compose it. Such a listening sensitivity does not guarantee success, for to do so would assume a total control over the situation, which is inherent in a possessive and ethnocentric world view. But it does open the possibility of listening to and understanding alternative viewpoints that one will surely miss if one is forever locked into an internal premise. The Copernican Revolution is a call to readjust assumptions. The consequences of such a fundamental shift of focus are not completely visible; but the dangers of continuing our present course are real indeed, according to Martin Buber.

> If psychologism becomes so intensified that the man can no longer bring his capacity for external relationship . . . to others, to the world, if his strength of relationship recoils backward into the I, if he has to encounter himself, if the double ever again appears to him, then the state exists that I call self-contradiction.[87]

Buber is suggesting that the "I" is not fundamental enough. Each one of us is necessary, but not sufficient for life to exist. If we believe we are the pivotal focus and internalize the world, we become self-contradictions, because we cannot exist alone; by definition of our dependencies on nature and others we live in relation.

In summary, the fundamental contention with the empathic approach to listening is that its internal premise establishes a subject/object dichotomy at odds with current scientific and philosophic studies. This paper has critiqued three ways that the subject/object split is extended through the empathy concept: (1) reification of the self, (2) teaching of empathy as technique, and (3) the struggle between inner organismic impulses and introjected values from external societal

sources. Each of the above is a product of internalized or psychologized conceptions of human interaction of, in this case, listening.

An alternative to empathic listening must forgo the cultural temptation to stress the above three notions. Existential-phenomenological sensitivity in listening must be grounded in everyday lived experience, not taken-for-granted technique. Yet our experience changes in accordance with our world view, which in the case of listening, is still in agreement with Ptolemy's world view. Perhaps it is time for theories of listening to move from the empathic inner premise of "getting in touch with selves" to a situational sensitivity that recognizes the ontological reality of meanings emerging, not in one's self, but "between" persons. This alternative recognizes that listening can be studied and even taught in the abstract. But each concrete moment must be met individually if genuine listening is to be given birth. What is considered improper listening for one situation may at another time be the appropriate communicative style. An ethical alternative to empathy is a rejection of psychologism for a listening sensitivity grounded in judgment, caring, criticism, agreement, rejection . . . A large variety of responses are warranted by the needs of the historical situation.

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[2]See for example, Sam Duker, Listening Bibliography, 2nd ed., (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1968); for more current citations, see Ella Erway, "Listening: Theory and Instruction--A Selected, Annotated Bibliography," Speech Communication Module (Falls Church, Va.: SCA and ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills, 1975); and William Work, "Listen, My Children . . . ", Communication Education, 27 (1978), pp. 146-152.

[3]Cynthia L. Berryman and Richard L. Weaver II, "A Survey of the Interpersonal Communication Course at U.S. Colleges and Universities," paper presented at the Midwest Basic Course Directors' Conference, (Lawrence, Kansas. February 10-11, 1978), p. 7.

[4]See for example, Charles M. Kelly, "Empathic Listening," Small Group Communication: A Reader, ed. Robert S. Cathcart and Larry A. Samovar, (Dubuque, Iowa: William C. Brown, Co., 1970), pp. 251-259; see also, Gerard Egan, "Listening as Empathic Support," Face-to-Face: The Small Group Experience and Interpersonal Growth, (Monterey, Cal.: Brooks/Cole Publishing Co., 1973). Both articles are also included in Bridges Not Walls: A Book About Interpersonal Communication, 2nd ed., ed. John Stewart, (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1977), pp. 222-226 and 228-231.

[5]See Carl R. Rogers, Client-Centered Therapy, (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1951); see also, Carl R. Rogers, "Communication: Its Blocking and Its Facilitation," in Communication: Concepts and Processes, rev. ed., ed. Joseph A. DeVito, (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1976), and Carl R. Rogers and Richard E. Farson, "Active Listening," in Readings in Interpersonal and Organizational Communication, 3rd ed., ed. Richard Huseman, Cal Logue, and Dwight Freshley, (Boston: Holbrook Press, 1977).

[6]Andrew D. Wolvin and Carolyn Gwynn Coakley, Listening Instruction (Falls Church, Va.: SCA and ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills, 1979), pp. 10-11.

[7]Five of the twelve workshops at the ILA Conference in Atlanta, Georgia, February 17-19, 1980, involved empathic listening or related considerations: Ella Erway, "Empathetic Listening: Theory and Skills;" Jackson Huntley, Virginia T. Katz and Albert M. Katz, "Empathic Listening: A Basic Communication Skill"; Erika Vora, "Listening as Human Connection"; Baxter Geeting and Corinne Geeting, "Assertive Listening and the Art of Awareness"; Nanette Johnson, "Please Hear What I'm Not Saying--Listening and the Helping Professions."

[8]Particularly relevant to the arguments in this paper is one formulation of the philosophical difficulties inherent in the presumption of empathy as a theory of understanding in Stanley Deetz' "Conceptualizing Human Understanding: Gadamer's Hermeneutics and American Communication Studies," Communication Quarterly, 26 (1978), pp. 12-23.

[9]Stewart has argued the advantages of adopting a philosophical approach in "Interpersonal Communication--A Meeting Between Persons," in Bridges Not Walls, pp. 10-25.

[10]Representative rather than exhaustive, this overview is intended to identify historical trends which have contributed to the development of consistent patterns and conceptualizations of empathic listening. Consequently, some abstraction for the purposes of clarification and comparison of concepts has been necessary. We have focused special attention on formulations of empathic listening as articulated in interpersonal communication texts and in the professional literature of speech communication.

[11]Gilda C. Parrella, "Projection and Adoption: Toward a Clarification of the Concept of Empathy," Quarterly Journal of Speech, 57 (1971), pp. 205-206.

[12]Edward B. Titchener, Lectures on the Experimental Psychology of the Thought-Processes (New York, 1909), cited in Parrella, p. 204n.

[13]Parrella, p. 210.

[14]For a concise review up to 1960, see Kenneth Gompertz, "The Relation of Empathy to Effective Communication," Journalism Quarterly, 37 (1960), pp. 533-546. See also, Robert L. Katz, Empathy: Its Nature and Uses (New York: Crowell-Collier Publishing Co., 1963). For a more recent survey, see Ezra Stotland, Kenneth E. Matthews Jr., Stanley E. Sherman, Robert O. Hansson and Barbara Z. Richardson, Empathy, Fantasy and Helping (Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage Publications, Inc., 1978), esp. pp. 11-25.

[15]Deetz, "Conceptualizing," pp. 14-16.

[16]David K. Berlo, The Process of Communication (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1960), p. 119, cited in Deetz, p. 15.

[17]Deetz, "Conceptualizing," p. 16.

[18]Berlo, pp. 122-123.

[19]Berlo, p. 122.

[20]Though not directly germane to our argument, it is important to note that some theorists have attempted to distinguish role-taking (or "perspective-taking") from empathic processes. See for example, Robert L. Kelley, W.J. Osborne and Clyde Hendrick, "Role-Taking and Role-Playing

in Human Communication," Human Communication Research, 1 (1974), pp. 62-74. For the "constructivist" perspective on role-taking, see Claudia Hale and Jesse G. Delia, "Cognitive Complexity and Social Perspective-Taking," Communication Monographs, 43 (1976), pp. 195-203.

[21]Berlo, p. 127.

[22]Deetz, "Conceptualizing," p. 16.

[23]If, as Wolvin and Coakley have suggested, the field of listening "still remains the 'orphan' of the language arts" (see Wolvin and Coakley, Listening Instruction, p. 1), then we are pressed to conclude that empathic listening is at best little more than a "second-cousin, once-removed." We have been unable to find a single article in speech communication's professional journals that explicitly addresses empathic listening as its primary concern or theme. The construction and dissemination of empathic listening theory in our discipline has fallen substantially under the purview of interpersonal communication and listening texts. Based on Berryman and Weaver's survey (see source cited above, p. 10), we made the following selections from their compilation of most frequently-used interpersonal communication texts: Ron Adler and Neil Towne, Looking Out/Looking In: Interpersonal Communication, 2nd ed. (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1978); William D. Brooks and Philip Emmert, Interpersonal Communication (Dubuque, Iowa: William C. Brown Co., 1976); Joseph A. DeVito, The Interpersonal Communication Book, 2nd ed. (New York: Harper and Row, 1980); Kim Giffin and Bobby R. Patton, Fundamentals of Interpersonal Communication, 2nd ed. (New York: Harper and Row, 1976); Gail E. Myers and Michele Tolela Myers, The Dynamics of Human Communication: A Laboratory Approach (New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1973); Brent D. Peterson, Gerald M. Goldhaber and R. Wayne Pace, Communication Probes, 2nd ed. (Chicago: Science Research Associates, 1977); Freda S. Sathré, Ray W. Olson and Clarissa I. Whitney, Let's Talk: An Introduction to Interpersonal Communication, 2nd ed. (Glenview, Ill: Scott, Foresman and Co., 1977); Dennis R. Smith and L. Keith Williamson, Interpersonal Communication: Roles, Rules, Strategies and Games (Dubuque Iowa: William C. Brown Co., 1977); Bridges Not Walls, ed. John Stewart, cited above; Kathleen S. Verderber and Rudolph F. Verderber, Inter-Act: Using Interpersonal Communication Skills (Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth Publishing Co., 1977). In addition to frequency of use, surveyed texts were purposely chosen for their disparate theoretical approaches.

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[24]The essential relation of empathy to effective communication is echoed by Arthur P. Bochner and Clifford W. Kelly, "Interpersonal Competence: Rationale, Philosophy and Implementation of a Conceptual Framework," Speech Teacher, 23 (1974), p. 289; see also, Arthur P. Bochner and Janet Yerby, "Factors Affecting Instruction in Interpersonal Competence," Communication Education, 26 (1977), pp. 91-103.

[25]That receptive abilities and analytic skills must precede appropriate enactment of expressive skills has been argued most convincingly in the literature of cognitive development. See for example, Jesse G. Delia and Ruth Ann Clark, "Cognitive Complexity, Social Perception, and the Development of Listener-Adapted Communication in Six-, Eight-, and Twelve-Year-Old Boys," Communication Monographs, 44 (1977), pp. 326-345.

[26]Egan in Stewart, Bridges Not Walls, p. 231.

[27]DeVito, p. 41.

[28]Giffin and Patton, p. 227.

[29]See Rogers, Client-Centered Therapy, cited above.

[30]Carl R. Rogers, "The Interpersonal Relationship: The Core of Guidance," Harvard Educational Review, 32 (1962), p. 420.

[31]Rogers, "The Interpersonal Relationship," p. 419.

[32]Ibid.

[33]Rogers' works were consistently cited in our survey of empathic listening literature. Of particular interest is the thematization and extension of Rogers' scheme in Koile, Listening As a Way of Becoming, cited above.

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[35]W. Barnett Pearce, "Teaching Interpersonal Communication as a Humane Science: A Comparative Analysis," Communication Education, 26 (1977), pp. 104-112.

[36]Descriptions and explications of this position can be found in Richard Johannesen, "The Emerging Concept of Communication as Dialogue," Quarterly Journal of Speech, 57 (1971), pp. 373-382; Jack R. Gibb, "Defensive Communication," Journal of Communication, 11 (1961), pp. 141-148; Giffin and Patton, Fundamentals, cited above.

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[38]See Johannesen, p. 376.

[39]See Rogers, "The Interpersonal Relationship," p. 421.

[40]Johannesen, p. 376.

[41]Deetz, "Conceptualizing," p. 17.

[42]Dean Barnlund, "Toward a Meaning-Centered Philosophy of Communication," Bridges Not Walls, ed. John Stewart, p. 40.

[43]Ronald C. Arnett, "Toward a Phenomenological Dialogue," Western Journal of Speech Communication, forthcoming; Deetz, "Conceptualizing," pp. 12-23; Brent D. Ruben, "Communication and Conflict: A System Theoretic Perspective," Quarterly Journal of Speech, 64 (1978), pp. 208-209; Herbert W. Simons, "Prologue," Perspectives on Communication and Conflict, eds. Gerald R. Miller and Herbert W. Simons (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1974), p. 4. In addition, a program entitled, "Interpersonal Communication Instruction in the '80's: Responses to the 'Me' Decade," was devoted to a critique of this theme at the 1980 Speech Communication Association Convention at New York.

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[46]For elaboration of the three-fold description of communication theory, see Arnett, "Dialogue." Also, the differences between the dialogical and transactional are discussed in Arnett's work and Deetz's "Conceptualizing," p. 17.

[47]Stanley Deetz, "Essays on Hermeneutics and Communication Research" (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Ohio University, 1973), p. 63.

[48]Zygmunt Bauman, Hermeneutics and Social Science (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978), pp. 162-163.

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